



## DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE SERVICES

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"Together...Reshaping Young Lives"

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### **DJS PULLS REMAINING YOUTHS FROM BOWLING BROOK Secretary DeVore Announces Action Plan To Reform Group Homes**

**BALTIMORE, March 2, 2007** – Today, Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) removed its final 8 youths from the Bowling Brook Preparatory School, and the school announced it would close. Additionally, DJS Secretary Donald DeVore announced an action plan for State-operated and State-licensed juvenile facilities. These announcements come in the wake of last month's fatal incident at Bowling Brook.

"Our mission is simple. We are charged with protecting and treating children – turning around lives – in order to protect Maryland's communities," said Secretary DeVore. "With that mission in mind, we have no option but to remove our remaining children. We must take responsibility for this situation – and for resolving it."

In addition to taking action at Bowling Brook, Secretary DeVore also announced broader reforms affecting all of Maryland's privately run juvenile facilities.

The 6-point action plan will:

- Remove the remaining youths in State custody from the school.
- Complete an inspection sweep of all private juvenile facilities within 90 days – to ensure compliance with all safety requirements.
- Issue new restraint guidelines for all State operated and State licensed juvenile facilities within 30 days.

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- Develop new crisis intervention training standards for State-operated and State-licensed facilities within 120 days, working with the other relevant State agencies – the Department of Human Resources, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and the Maryland State Department of Education.
- Begin to conduct exit interviews with youth after they leave State-operated and State-licensed facilities – to ensure that they feel able speak freely about problems and concerns.
- Create a quality assurance capacity within DJS – to proactively ensure that high standards are being met.

Since Isaiah Simmons' death on January 23, DJS has:

- Assigned four staff members, around the clock, to monitor Bowling Brook – including child advocates, licensing monitors and investigators, as well as top DJS managers;
- Restricted Bowling Brook staff from restraining youths;
- Conducted a review of the facility's practices;
- And eight Bowling Brook employees have been placed on administrative leave – at DJS' insistence – while the Carroll County Sheriff's Department is investigating the incident, with full support from DJS.

During his first week in office, Secretary DeVore has taken swift action to reform Maryland's troubled private group home system. DJS will also begin implementing a broad range of reforms, including many recommendations from the just-released Transition Report.

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